(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what steps Government are being taking to protect and promote rights of minority communities in SAARC countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) On September 15th 2005, a vehicle of the High Commission of India, Dhaka with diplomatic plates, in which spouse of Acting High Commissioner was travelling was blocked and confined by a group of people on a public road in Dhaka. Several persons, including some armed with automatic assault weapons, thereafter assaulted the mission's vehicle, used abusive language against the spouse of the acting High Commissioner and forcibly detained the chauffeur and the vehicle. The High Commissioner filed a complaint against the incident with the police. The issue was also taken up with the acting High Commissioner of Bangladesh in New Delhi and the Government of Bangladesh in Dkaka, where our shock and serious concern at the incident was converyed. The Government of Bangladesh was also urged to take necessary action in the matter.

(c) The primary responsibility for the protection of the life, liberty and property of all citizens, including minorities, rest with the Government concerned. Government of India in its bilateral dialogue with SAARC countries does emphasize the need for a just and humane treatment of minorities and respect for their basic human rights. Government of India has also been participating in developmental and reconstruction projects in some SAARC countries targeted at the welfare of the minority communities.

Pakistani visa to Indian pilgrims

1723. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have impressed upon the Government of Pakistan to grant visas to Indian pilgrims who propose to visit Hindu temples at Katasraj and other places in Pakistan on reciprocal basis as Indian Government issue large number of visas to Pakistanis to visit places of pilgrimage in India;

(b) if so the details in this regard; and

(c) by when the action thereon is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) the visit of pilgrims between India and Pakistan is covered under the bilateral "Protocal on visits to Religious Shrines-1974". The Protocal provides for the number of pilgrims, pilgrimage centres and the frequency of such visits between India and Pakistan. During the Secretary (Culture) level talks held in Islamabad on July 26-27, 2005, it was agreed to expand the 1974 bilateral Protocol to increase the number of shrines in both countries as also the number of pilgrims.

During the visit of former EAM to Pakistan from October 2-5, 2005 for a review meeting of the Composite Dialogue, the Indian side, *inter alia,* presented a draft proposal in this regard to the Pakistani side. Pakistan has not responded to the proposal.

Amendments in Plantation Labour Act

1724. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have started the process of making necessary amendments in the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 and make it more relevant to the current industrial scenario;

(b) by when final decision in this regard is likely to be taken; and

(c) the main amendments proposed and to what extent it would be helpful?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRA SEKHAR RAO): (a) to (c) Consultation on the amendments to the Plantations Labour Act, 1951 has been taken up at Tripartite fora. Measures for amendment can only be taken after consensus is arrived at.

Rate of EPF contribution

1725. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the rate of contribution of Employees Provident Fund being transferred to Pension Fund at present;

(b) whether it is proposed to transfer greater amount towards 'Pension Fund' so that, employees can get higher pension on superannuation;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and